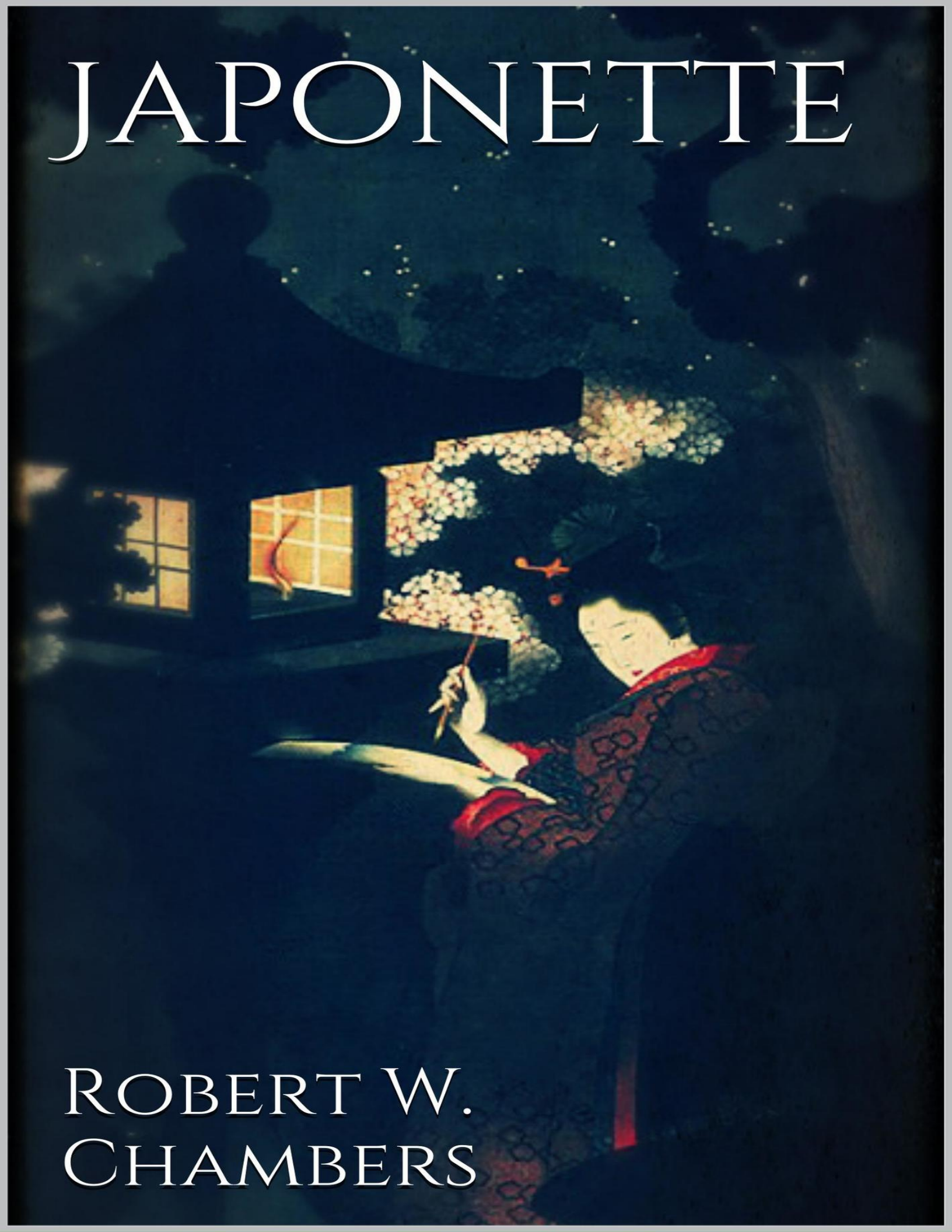
JAPONETTE



ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

Japonette

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Robert W. Chambers

IN FORMA PAUPERIS

The failure of the old-time firm of Edgerton, Tennant & Co. was unusual only because it was an honest one—the bewildered creditors receiving a hundred cents on a dollar from property not legally involved.

Edgerton had been dead for several years; the failure of the firm presently killed old Tennant, who was not only old in years, but also old in fashion—so obsolete, in fact, were the fashions he clung to that he had used his last cent in a matter which he regarded as involving his personal honor.

The ethically laudable but materially ruinous integrity of old Henry Tennant had made matters rather awkward for his orphaned nieces. Similar traditions in the Edgerton family—of which there now remained only a single representative, James Edgerton 3d—devastated that young man's inheritance so completely that he came back to the United States, via Boston, on a cattle steamer and arrived in New York the following day with two dollars in loose silver and a confused determination to see the affair through without borrowing.

He walked from the station to the nearest of his clubs. It was very early, and the few club servants on duty gazed at him with friendly and respectful sympathy.

In the visitors' room he sat down, wrote out his resignation, drew up similar valedictories to seven other expensive and fashionable clubs, and then picked up his two suit cases again, declining with a smile the offered assistance from Read, the doorman who had been in service there as long as the club had existed.

"Mr. Edgerton," murmured the old man, "Mr. Inwood is in the Long Room, sir."

Edgerton thought a moment, then walked to the doorway of the Long Room and looked in. At the same time Inwood

glanced up from his newspaper.
"Hello!" he exclaimed; "is that you, Edgerton?"
"Who the devil do you think it is?" replied Edgerton amiably.
They shook hands. Inwood said:
"What's the trouble—a grouch, a hangover, or a lady?"
Edgerton laughed, placed his suit cases on the floor, and seated himself in a corner of the club window for the first time in six months—and for the last time in many, many months to come.
"It's hot in town," he observed. "How are you, Billy?"
"Blooming. Accept from me a long, cold one with a permanent fizz to it. Yes? No? A Riding Club cocktail, then? What? Nix for the rose-wreathed bowl?"
Edgerton shook his head. "Nix for the bowl, thanks."
"Well, you won't mind if I ring for first-aid materials, will you?"
The other politely waved his gloved hand.
A servant arrived and departed with the emergency order. Inwood pushed an unpleasant and polychromatic mess of Sunday newspapers aside and reseated himself in the leather chair.
"I'm terribly sorry about what happened to you, Jim," he said. "So is everybody. We all thought it was to be another gay year of that dear Paris for you——"
"I thought so, too," nodded Edgerton; "but what a fellow thinks hasn't anything to do with anything. I've found out that."
Inwood emptied his glass and gazed at the frost on it, sentimentally.
"The main thing," he said, "is for your friends to stand by you——"
"No; the main thing is for them to stand aside—kindly, Billy—while I pass down and out for a while."
"My dear fellow——"
"While I pass *out* ," repeated Edgerton. "I may return; but

that will be up to me—and not up to them."
"Well, what good is friendship?"
"Good to believe in—no good otherwise. Let it alone and it's the finest thing in the world; use it, and you will have to find another name for it."
He smiled at Inwood.
"Friendship must remain always the happiest and most comforting of all—theories," he said. "Let it alone; it has a value inestimable in its own place—no value otherwise."
Inwood began to laugh.
"Your notion concerning friends and friendship isn't the popular one."
"But my friends will sleep the sounder for knowing what are my views concerning friendship."
"That's cynical and unfair," began the other, reddening.
"No, it's honest; and you notice that even my honesty puts a certain strain on our friendship," retorted Edgerton, still laughing.
"You're only partly in earnest, aren't you?"
"Oh, I'm never really in earnest about anything. That's why Fate extended an unerring and iron hand, grasped me by the slack of my pants, shook me until all my pockets turned inside out, and set me down hard on the trolley tracks of Destiny. Just now I'm crawling for the sidewalk and the skirts of Chance."
He laughed again without the slightest bitterness, and looked out of the window.
The view from the club window was soothing: Fifth Avenue lay silent and deserted in the sunshine of an early summer morning.
Inwood said: "The papers—everybody—spoke most glowingly of the way your firm settled with its creditors."
"Oh, hell! Why should ordinary honesty make such a stir in New York? Don't let's talk about it; I'm going home, anyway."
"Where?"

"To my place."
"It's been locked up for over a year, hasn't it?"
"Yes, but there's a janitor——"
"Come down to Oyster Bay with me," urged Inwood; "come on, Jim, and forget your troubles over Sunday."
"As for my troubles," returned the other, rising with a shrug and pulling on his gloves, "I've had leisure on the ocean to classify and pigeonhole the lot of them. I know exactly what I'm going to do, and I'm going home to begin it."
"Begin what?" inquired Inwood with a curiosity entirely friendly.
"I'm going to find out," said Edgerton, "whether any of what my friends have called my 'talents' are real enough to get me a job worth three meals a day, or whether they'll merely procure for me the hook."
"What are you thinking of trying?"
"I don't know exactly. I thought of turning some one of my parlor tricks into a future profession—if people will let me."
"Writing stories?"
"Well, that, or painting, or illustrating—music, perhaps. Perhaps I could write a play, or act in some other fellow's; or do some damn thing or other—" he ended vaguely. And for the first time Inwood saw that his friend's eyes were weary, and that his face seemed unusually worn. It was plain enough that James Edgerton 3d had already journeyed many a league with Black Care, and that he had not yet outridden that shadowy horseman.
"Jim," said Inwood seriously, "why won't you let me help you—" But Edgerton checked him in a perfectly friendly manner.
"You *are* helping me," he said; "that's why I'm going about my business. Success to yours, Billy. Good-by! I'll be back"—glancing around the familiar room—"sometime or other; back here and around town, everywhere, as usual," he added confidently; and the haunted look faded. He smiled and nodded with a slight gesture of adieu, picked up

his suit cases, and, with another friendly shake of his head for the offers of servants' assistance, walked out into the sunshine of Fifth Avenue, and west toward his own abode in Fifty-sixth Street.

When he arrived there, he was hot and dusty, and he decided to let Kenna carry up his luggage. So he descended to the area.

Every time he pulled the basement bell he could hear it jingle inside the house somewhere, but nobody responded, and after a while he remounted the area steps to the street and glanced up at the brown-stone façade. Every window was shut, every curtain drawn. That block on Fifty-sixth Street on a Sunday morning in early summer is an unusually silent and deserted region. Edgerton looked up and down the sunny street. After Paris the city of his birth seemed very mean and treeless and shabby in the merciless American sunshine.

Fumbling for his keys he wondered to what meaner and shabbier street he might soon be destined, now that fortune had tripped him up; and how soon he would begin to regret the luxury of this dusty block and the comforts of the house which he was now about to enter. And he fitted his latch-key to the front door and let himself in.

It was a very clumsy and old-fashioned apartment house, stupidly built, five stories high; there was only one apartment to a floor, and no elevator. The dark and stuffy austerity of this out-of-date building depressed him anew as he entered. Its tenants, of course, were away from town for the summer—respectable, middle-aged people—stodgy, wealthy, dull as the carved banisters that guarded the dark, gas-lit well of the staircase. Each family owned its own apartment—had been owners for years. Edgerton inherited his floor from an uncle—widely known among earlier generations as a courtly and delightful old gentleman—an amateur of antiquities and the possessor of many very extraordinary things, including his own private character

and disposition.
Carrying his suit cases, which were pasted all over with tricolored labels, the young man climbed the first two flights of stairs, and then, placing his luggage on the landing, halted to recover his breath and spirits.
The outlook for his future loomed as dark as the stair well. He sat down on the top step, lighted a cigarette, and gazed up at the sham stained glass in the skylight above. And now for the first time he began to realize something of the hideousness of his present position, his helplessness, unfitted as he was to cope with financial adversity or make an honest living at anything.
If people had only let him alone when he first emerged from college as mentally naked as anything newly fledged, his more sensible instincts probably would have led him to remain in the ancient firm of his forefathers, Edgerton, Tennant & Co., dealers in iron.
But fate and his friends had done the business for him, finally persuading him to go abroad. He happened, unfortunately, to possess a light, graceful, but not at all unusual, talent for several of the arts; he could tinkle catchy improvisations on a piano, sketch in oil and water colors, model in clay, and write the sort of amateur verse popular in college periodicals. Women often evinced an inclination to paw him and tell him their troubles; fool friends spoke vaguely of genius and "achieving something distinctly worth while"—which finally spoiled a perfectly good business man, especially after a third-rate periodical had printed one of his drawings, and a fourth-rate one had published a short story by him; and the orchestra at the Colonnade had played one of his waltzes, and Bernstein of the Frivolity Theater had offered to read any libretto he might send.
So he had been ass enough to take a vacation and offer himself two years' study abroad; and he had been away almost a year when the firm went to the wall, carrying with

it everything he owned on earth except this apartment and its entailed contents, which he could neither cast into the melting pot for his creditors nor even sell for his own benefit. However, the creditors were paid dollar for dollar, and those finer and entirely obsolete points of the Edgerton honor remained silver bright; and the last of the Edgertons was back once more in New York with his apartment, his carvings, tapestries and pictures, which the will forbade him to sell, and two dollars change in his pockets.

Presently he cast his cigarette from him, picked up his suit cases, and started upward, jaw set. It was a good thing for him that he had a jaw like that. It was his only asset now. So far in life, however, he had never used it.

Except the echo of his tread on the uncarpeted staircase, not another sound stirred in the house. Every landing was deserted, every apartment appeared to be empty and locked up for the summer. Dust lay gray on banister and landing; the heated atmosphere reeked with the odor of moth balls and tar paper seeping from locked doors.

On the top floor a gas jet flickered as usual in the corridor which led to his apartment. By its uncertain flame he selected a key from the bunch he carried, and let himself into his own rooms; and the instant he set foot across the threshold he knew that something was wrong.

Whether it had been a slight sound which he fancied he heard in the private passage-way, or whether he imagined some stealthy movement in the golden dusk beyond, he could not determine; but a swift instinct halted and challenged him, and left him listening.

As he stood there, checked, slowly the idea began to possess him that there was somebody else in the apartment. When the slight but sudden chill had left him, and his hair no longer tingled on the verge of rising, he moved forward a step, then again halted. For a moment, still grasping both suit cases, he stood as though at bay, listening, glancing from alcove to corridor, from one dim

spot of light to another where a door ajar here and there revealed corners of empty rooms.
Whether or not there was at that moment another living being except himself in the place he did not know, but he did know that otherwise matters were not as he had left them a year ago in his apartment.
For one thing, here, under his feet, was spread his beautiful, antique Daghestan runner, soft as deep velvet, which he had left carefully rolled up, sewed securely in burlap, and stuffed full of camphor balls. For another thing, his ear had caught a low, rhythmical sound from the mantel in his bedroom. It was his frivolous Sèvres clock ticking as indiscreetly as it had ever ticked in the boudoir of its gayly patched and powdered mistress a hundred and fifty years ago—which was disturbing to Edgerton, as he had been away for a year, and had left his apartment locked up with orders to Kenna, the janitor, to keep out until otherwise instructed by letter or cable.
Listening, eyes searching the dusk, he heard somewhere the rustle of a curtain blowing at an open window; and, stepping softly to his dining-room door, he turned the knob cautiously and peered in.
No window seemed to be open there; the place was dark, the furniture still in its linen coverings.
As he moved silently to the butler's pantry, where through loosely closed blinds the sunshine glimmered, making an amber-tinted mystery of the silence, it seemed for a moment to him as though he could still hear somewhere the stir of the curtain; and he turned and retraced his steps through the library.
In the twilight of the place, half revealed as he passed, he began now to catch glimpses of a state of things that puzzled him.
Coming presently to his dressing room, he opened the door, and, sure enough, there was a window open, and beside it a curtain fluttered gayly. But what completely monopolized

his attention was a number of fashionable trunks—wardrobe trunks, steamer trunks, hat trunks, shoe trunks—some open, and the expensive-looking contents partly visible; some closed and covered. And on every piece of this undoubtedly feminine luggage were the letters D.T. or S.T. And on top of the largest trunk sat a live cat.

CORPUS DELICTI

The cat was pure white and plumy, and Persian. Out of its wonderful sky-blue eyes it looked serenely at Edgerton; and the young man gazed back, astonished. Then, suddenly, he caught a glimpse of the bedroom beyond, and froze to a statue.

The object that appeared to petrify him lay flung across his bed—a trailing garment of cobweb lace touched here and there with rose-tinted ribbons.

For a moment he stared at it hypnotized; then his eyes shifted wildly to his dresser, which seemed to be covered with somebody else's toilet silver and crystal, and— *what* was that row of cunning little commercial curls!—that chair heaped with fluffy stuffs, lacy, intimate things, faintly fragrant!

"A dainty, unreal shape, exquisite as a tinted phantom stealing through a fairy tale of Old Japan."

"A dainty, unreal shape, exquisite as a tinted phantom stealing through a fairy tale of Old Japan."

With a violent shiver he turned his startled eyes toward the parted tapestry gently stirring in the unfelt summer wind. From where he stood he could see into the great studio beyond. A small, flowered silk slipper lay near the threshold, high of heel, impertinent, fascinating; beyond, on the corner of a table stood a bowl full of peonies, ivory, pink, and salmon-tinted; and their perfume filled the place. Somebody had rolled up the studio shades. Sunshine turned the great square window to a sheet of dazzling glory, and against it, picked out in delicate silhouette, a magic shadow was moving—a dainty, unreal shape, exquisite as a tinted phantom stealing through a fairy tale of Old Japan.

Suddenly the figure turned its head and saw him, and stood motionless against the flare of light—a young girl, very slim in her shimmering vestments of blossom-sprayed silk.

The next moment he walked straight into the studio. Neither spoke. She examined him out of wide and prettily shaped eyes; he inspected her with amazed intentness. Everything about her seemed so unreal, so subtly fragrant—the pink peonies like fluffy powder-puffs above each little close-set ear, the rose-tinted silhouette of her, the flushed cheeks, soft bare arms, the silk-sheathed feet shod in tiny straw sandals tied with vermilion cords.

"Who are you?" she asked; and her voice seemed to him as charmingly unreal as the rest of the Japanese fairy tale that held him enthralled.

"Will you please go out again at once!" she said, and he woke up partly.

"This—this is perfectly incredible," he said slowly.

"It is, indeed," she said, placing a snowy finger upon an electric button and retaining it there.

He regarded her without comprehension, muttering:
"I—I simply cannot realize it—that cat—those g-garments—you——"
"There is another thing you don't realize," she said with heightened color, "that I am steadily ringing the janitor's bell—and the janitor is large and violent and Irish, and he is probably halfway upstairs by this time——"
"Do you take me for a malefactor?" he asked, astounded.
"I am not afraid of you in the least," she retorted, still keeping her finger on the bell.
"Afraid of *me* ? Of course you are not."
"I am *not* ! Although your two suit cases are probably packed with the silver from my dressing stand."
"What!"
"Then—then—what have you put into your suit cases? *What* are you doing in this apartment? And will you please leave your suit cases and escape immediately?"
Her voice betrayed a little unsteadiness now, and Edgerton said:
"Please don't be frightened if I seem to remain——"
"You *are* remaining!"
"Of course, I am." He forced an embarrassed smile. "I've got to; I haven't any other place to go. There are all kinds of complications here, and I think you had better listen to me and stop ringing. The janitor is out anyway."
"He is *not* !" she retorted, now really frightened; "I can hear him coming up the stairway—probably with a p-pistol ——"
Edgerton turned red. "When I next set eyes on that janitor," he said, "I'll probably knock his head off.... *Don't* be frightened! I only meant it humorously. Really, you must listen to me, because you and I have some rather important matters to settle within the next few minutes."
In his growing perplexity and earnestness he placed his suit cases on the rug and advanced a step toward her, and she shrank away, her hands flat against the wall behind her,

the beautiful, frightened eyes fixed on his—and he halted.
"I haven't the slightest notion who you are," he said, bewildered; "but I'm pretty sure that I'm James Edgerton, and that this is my apartment. But how you happen to be inhabiting it I can't guess, unless that rascally janitor sublet it to you supposing that I'd be away for another year and never know it."
" *You* !—James Edgerton!" she exclaimed.
"My steamer docked yesterday."
" *You* are James Edgerton?—of Edgerton, Tennant & Co.?"
He began to laugh.
"I *was* James Edgerton, of Edgerton, Tennant & Co.; I am now only a silent partner in Fate, Destiny & Co.... If you don't mind—if you please—who are *you* ?"
"Why, I'm Diana Tennant!"
" *Who?* "
"Diana Tennant! Haven't you ever heard of my sister and me?"
"You mean you're those two San Francisco nieces?" he asked, astonished.
"I'm one of them. Silvette is sitting on the roof."
"On—the *roof* !"
"Yes; we have a roof garden—some geraniums and things, and a hammock. It's just a makeshift until we secure employment.... Is it possible that you are really James Edgerton? And didn't you know that we had rented your apartment by the month?"
He passed an uncertain hand over his eyes.
"Will you let me sit down a moment and talk to you?" he said.
"Please—of course. I *do* beg your pardon, Mr. Edgerton.... You must understand how startling it was to look up and see a man standing there with two suit cases."
He began to laugh; and after a moment she ventured to smile in an uncertain, bewildered way, and seated herself in a big velvet chair against the light.

They sat looking at each other, lost in thought: he evidently absorbed in the problem before him; she, unquiet, waiting, the reflex of unhappy little perplexities setting her sensitive lips aquiver at moments.

"You did rent this apartment from the janitor?" he said at length.

"My sister and I—yes. Didn't he have your permission?"

"No.... But don't worry.... I'll fix it up somehow; we'll arrange——"

"It is perfectly horrid!" she exclaimed. "What in the world can you think of us? ... But we were quite innocent—it was merely chance. Isn't it strange, Mr. Edgerton!—Silvette and I had walked and walked and walked, looking for some furnished apartment within our means which we might take by the month; and in Fifty-sixth Street we saw the sign, 'Apartment and Studio to let for the summer,' and we inquired, and he let us have it for almost nothing.... And we never even knew that it belonged to *you* !"

"To whom did you draw your checks for the rent?"

"We were to pay the janitor."

"Have you done so?" he asked sharply.

"N-no. We arranged—not to pay—until we could afford it ——"

"I'm glad of that! Don't you pay that scoundrel one penny. As for me, of course I couldn't think of accepting——"

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" she said in pretty despair; "I've got to tell you everything now! Several humiliating things—circumstances—very tragic, Mr. Edgerton."

"No; you need not tell me a single thing that is likely to distress you."

"But I've *got* to! You don't understand. That wretched janitor has put us in a position from which there is absolutely no escape. Because I—we ought to go away instantly—b-but we—can't!"

"Not at all, Miss Tennant. I ought to leave you in possession, and I—I'm trying to think out how to—to do it."

"How can we ask *you* to do such a——"
"You don't ask; I've got to find some means—ways—expedients——"
"But we *can't* turn you out of your own place!"
"No; but I've got to turn myself out. If you'll just let me think——"
"I will—oh, I will, Mr. Edgerton; but please, *please* let me explain the dreadful and humiliating conditions first, so that you won't consider me absolutely shameless."
"I don't!"
"You will unless I tell you—unless I find courage to tell you how it is with my sister and me."
"I'd like to know, but you must not feel obliged to tell me."
"I do feel obliged! I *must* ! We're poor. We've spent all our money, and we *can't* go anywhere else very well!"
Edgerton glanced at the luxury in the next room, astonished; then his gaze reverted to the silk-clad figure before him.
"You don't understand, of course," she said, flushing. "How could you suppose us to be almost penniless living here in such a beautiful place with all those new trunks and gowns and pretty things! But *that* is exactly why we are doing it!"
She leaned forward in her chair, the tint of excitement in her cheeks.
"After the failure, Silvette and I hadn't anything very much! — *you* know how everything of uncle's went—" She stopped abruptly. "Why—why, probably everything of yours went, too! Did it?"
He laughed: "Pretty nearly everything."
"Oh! oh!" she cried; "what a perfectly atrocious complication! Perhaps—perhaps you haven't money enough to—to go somewhere else for a while. Have you?"
"Well, I'll fix it somehow."
"Mr. Edgerton!" she said excitedly, "Silvette and I have *got* to go!"
"No," he said laughing, "you've only got to go on with your

story, Miss Tennant. I am a very interested and sympathetic listener."
"Yes," she said desperately, "I must go on with that, too. Listen, Mr. Edgerton; we thought a long while and discussed *everything* , and we concluded to stake everything on an idea that came to Silvette. So we drew out all the money we had and we paid all our just debts, and we parted with our chaperone—who was a perfect d-darling—I'll tell you about her sometime—and we took Argent, our cat, and came straight to New York, and we hunted and hunted for an apartment until we found this! And then—do you know what we did?" she demanded excitedly.
"I couldn't guess!" said Edgerton, smiling.
"We bought clothes—beautiful clothes! And everything luxurious that we didn't have we bought—almost frightened to death while we were doing it—and *then* we advertised!"


"We *had* to spend all our money on clothes."

"We had to spend all our money on clothes."
"Advertised!"
"From *here* ! Can you *ever* forgive us?"

"Of course," he said, mystified; "but what did you advertise?"
"Ourselves!"
" *What!* "
"Certainly; and we've had replies, but we haven't liked the people so far. Indeed, we advertised in the most respectable daily, weekly and monthly papers—" She sprang to her feet, trotted over to the sofa, picked up an illustrated periodical devoted to country life, and searching hastily through the advertising pages, found and read aloud to him, still standing there, the following advertisement:
" *Two ladies of gentle birth and breeding, cultivated linguists, musicians, thoroughly conversant with contemporary events, efficient at auction bridge, competent to arrange dinners and superintend decorations, desire employment in helping to entertain house parties, week-ends, or unwelcome but financially important relatives and other visitations, at country houses, camps, bungalows, or shooting boxes* .
" *For terms write to or call at Apartment Five——* "
She turned her flushed face toward him.
" *Your* address in full follows," she said. "Can you ever bring yourself to forgive us?"
His astonished gaze met hers. "That doesn't worry me," he said.
"It is generous and—splendid of you to say so," she faltered. "You understand now, don't you? We *had* to spend all our money on clothes; and we thought ourselves so fortunate in this beautiful apartment because it was certain to impress people, and nobody could possibly suspect us of poverty with that great picture by Goya over the mantel and priceless tapestries and rugs and porcelains in every direction—and our cat to make it look as though we really belonged here." Her voice trembled a moment on the verge of breaking and her eyes grew brilliant as freshly washed stars, but she lifted her resolute little head and caught the

tremulous lower lip in her teeth. Then, the crisis over, she dropped the illustrated paper, came slowly back to her chair and sank down, extending her arms along the velvet upholstery in silence.

Between them, on the floor, a sapphire rug stretched its ancient Persian folds. He looked at it gravely, thinking that its hue matched her eyes. Then he considered more important matters, plunging blindly into profound abstraction; and found nothing in the depths except that he had no money to go anywhere, but that he must go nevertheless.

He looked up after a moment.

"Would you and your sister think it inhospitable of me if I ask when you—I mean—if I——"

"I know what you mean, Mr. Edgerton. Silvette and I are going at once.

"You can't. Do you think I'd permit it? Please remember, too, that you've advertised from here, and you've simply got to remain here. All I meant to ask was whether you think it might be for a week or two yet, but, of course, you can't tell—and forgive me for asking—but I was merely trying to adjust several matters in my mind to conditions——"

"Mr. Edgerton, we cannot remain. There is not in my mind the slightest doubt concerning your financial condition. If you *could* let us stay until we secured employment, I'd ask it of you—because you are James Edgerton; but you can't"—she rose with decision—"and I'm going up to the roof to tell Silvette."

"If you stir I'll take those suit cases and depart for good."

"You are very generous—the Edgertons always were, I have heard, but we cannot accept——"

He interrupted, smiling: "I think the Tennants never needed instruction concerning the finer points of obligation." ... He stood a moment thoughtfully, turning over and over the two dollars in his pocket; then with a laugh he walked across the studio and picked up his suit cases.

"Don't do that!" she said in a grave voice.
"There is nothing else to do, Miss Tennant."
"There's another bedroom."
They stood, not regarding one another, considering there in the sunshine.
"Will you wait until I return?" she asked, looking up. "I want to talk to Silvette.... I'd like to have Silvette see you. Will you wait? Because I've come to one of my quick conclusions—I'm celebrated for them, Mr. Edgerton. Will you wait?"
"Yes," he said, smiling.
So she trotted away in her little straw sandals and flowery vestments and butterfly sash; and he began to pace the studio, hands clasped behind him, trying to think out matters and ways and means—trying to see a way clear which offered an exit from this complication without forcing him to do that one thing of which he had a steadfast horror—borrow money from a friend.
Mingled, too, with his worried cogitations was the thought of Henry Tennant's nieces—these young California girls of whom he had vaguely heard without any particular interest. New Yorkers are never interested in relatives they never saw; seldom in any relatives at all. And, long ago, there had been marriage between Tennant and Edgerton—in colonial days, if he remembered correctly; and, to his own slight surprise, he felt it now as an added obligation. It was not enough that he efface himself until they found employment; more than that was due them from an Edgerton. And, as he had nothing to do it with, he wondered how he was to do anything at all for these distant cousins.
Standing there in the sunshine he cast an ironical glance around him at the Beauvais tapestries, the old masters, the carved furniture of Charles II's time, rugs dyed with the ancient splendor of the East, made during the great epoch when carpets of Ispahan, Damascus—and those matchless